

REMARKS

As a preliminary matter, Applicants note for the record that the Examiner has not responded to the Response to May 24, 2006 Office Communication and Amendment D, which was filed on June 26, 2006. Again, Applicants specifically request that the Examiner answer this Response by withdrawing the erroneous May 24, 2006 Office Communication. To date, the Communication has not been withdrawn, even though the outstanding Office Action mailed September 20, 2006 gives the appearance that the erroneous Office Communication was withdrawn.

With respect to the outstanding Election/Restriction Requirement, Applicants submit that the requirement itself is defective, because it does not identify which claims the Examiner believes to read upon which of the “species” the Examiner has identified. The Examiner asserts that some claims exclude one of protrusions and slits but the Examiner does not identify which claims allegedly do so.

Therefore, Applicants provisionally elect the “second species” identified by the Examiner, but with traverse. The Examiner identifies the “second species” as the embodiment that has slits. All of pending claims 38-53 though, read upon this “species.” Claims 38-41 and 52-53 specifically require at least one slit, and independent claim 42, from which all of claims 43-51 depend, expressly recites “a linearly arranged protrusion or slit.” Accordingly, Applicants are at a loss to understand which claims the Examiner means to restrict from this alleged species he has identified.

The Examiner further erroneously asserts that “the species are independent or distinct because [they] are mutually exclusive, that is it must be either a protrusion or a slit[;] it can’t be both at the same time.” The Examiner does not cite any particular claim from the present Application, however, to support this statement. In fact, none of the pending claims of the present Application exclude the presence of protrusions and slits together. As discussed above, claims 38-41 and 52-53, for example, require at least one slit. Not one of these claims includes any language that would exclude the additional presence of a protrusion. Similarly, none of the pending claims that feature the presence of a protrusion exclude the addition of a slit in such embodiments.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Examiner must either at least identify which claims he believes read only upon one species or another, and the reasons therefore, or withdraw the outstanding Election/Restriction Requirement. Additionally, Applicants still await the Examiner’s answer to the Response filed on June 26, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

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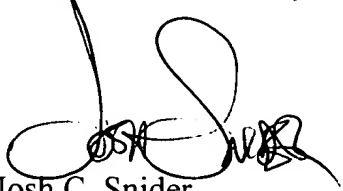
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October 19, 2006

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